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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2005

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE THEMES:

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HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

US Warns Ankara: Military Intervention Will Destabilize Iraq

- Sabah

US: No Troop Buildup Against Turkey - Hurriyet

US Opens to 'TRNC' - Aksam

US Commercial Counselor Lands at Ercan Airport in 'TRNC' - Hurriyet

Greek Cypriots Furious Over US Trade Mission to 'TRNC' - Milliyet

Sistani Will Have the Last Word in Iraq - Milliyet

Syria to Buy Russian Missiles - Sabah

US, EU Disagree Over Lebanese Hizbullah - Hurriyet

Negroponte to be 'Lord of the Spies' - Sabah

US Intelligence Boss to Come From Baghdad - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS

US Embassy Denies Troops Build-Up in Northern Iraq - Radikal

Northern Iraq Warning From US - Cumhuriyet

Nicosia Angry about US Trade Visit to 'TRNC' - Radikal

US Companies Make Business Landing in 'TRNC' - Zaman

Visiting US Companies Signal Removal of Sanctions on 'TRNC'

- Zaman

Rice Provokes World Against Syria - Yeni Safak

US Puts Heavy Pressure on Syria - Radikal

For Now, US Prefers Diplomatic Pressure on Iran - Cumhuriyet

Tehran Warns of 'Devastating' Response to US Attack - Radikal

PM Erdogan: UN Failed in Cyprus, Iraq - Yeni Safak

Negroponte Tapped as New US Intelligence Chief - Radikal

BRIEFING

US Embassy Denies Military Buildup in Northern Iraq: The US Embassy in Ankara denied Thursday a recent article in "The Guardian" claiming that the US has massed troops in northern Iraq in anticipation of ethnic conflict or a possible military intervention by Turkey. The statement notes that there have been changes to the mission of US forces, duties in northern Iraq, but denies that any changes are directed against Turkey. The US is pleased by the cooperation and support provided by Turkey for coalition efforts in Iraq. According to the statement, a military intervention by any of Iraq's neighbors would bring destabilization and wider conflict. The statement added that the US 'has no reason to think' that Turkey would undertake such an action. Several papers reported that the 'warning' tone of the embassy statement caused discomfort among officials at the Foreign Ministry. Unidentified MFA officials told journalists that the statement went beyond denying the "Guardian" story, and unnecessarily made comments on Turkey's behalf.

US Trade Delegation Visit to 'TRNC' Draws Harsh Greek Cypriot Reaction: A US trade delegation of 12 leading American companies paid a landmark visit to north Cyprus on Thursday to explore business opportunities. The Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce hailed the visit as a 'milestone' of economic and political significance. 'The presence of US brands here will have a great influence on the Greek Cypriots,' told Ali Erel, head of the chamber, to the Turkish press. Halim Neyzi, chairman of the American Business Forum in Turkey, which organized the trip, said the visit may be an initial step forward for recognition of the 'TRNC.' The delegation, headed by US Embassy Commercial Counselor Amer Kayani, prompted a formal protest from the Greek Cypriot government. Greek Cypriot spokesman Chrysostomides said his government objected to the visit because American businessmen were accompanied by a US diplomat who entered Cyprus through an 'illegal' airport in the north. President Papadopoulos denounced the visit, saying it would neither help efforts for reunification nor

enhance Cyprus-US relations. Prime Minister Erdogan described the delegation's visit as 'positive,' and called on the Europeans to undertake a similar initiative. 'After all,' the PM said, 'the EU made a commitment on this issue as well.' "Radikal" reports from Athens that Assistant Secretary of State Beth Jones told Greek journalists in a

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teleconference that the US business delegation to northern Cyprus was a 'timely' event. 'Just like the European Union, the US is trying to free north Cyprus of sanctions. Even President Papadopoulos has made statements in favor of the Turkish Cypriots' economic development,' Jones reportedly said. 'It is absurd that poverty should prevail in north Cyprus,' she added.

Syrian Ambassador Holds Israel Responsible for the Hariri Killing: The Syrian Ambassador to Ankara, Halid Raad, said that former Lebanese Prime Minister Refik Hariri had been assassinated by those wishing to incite ethnic division in Lebanon, "Milliyet" reports. 'Israel, the strongest opponent of a strong and stable Lebanon, is responsible for the killing of Hariri,' Raad claimed, adding that Hariri had been planning to visit Syria before his death. "Milliyet" reports that President Sezer, in a meeting with opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal, argued that the Hariri assassination 'would only bring trouble for Syria.' 'Why would the Syrians possibly want to carry out such an action?' Sezer reportedly asked.

FM Gul Visits the Hariri Family in Beirut: FM Abdullah Gul went to Beirut Thursday and conveyed Turkey's condolences to the family of assassinated former Lebanese PM Refik Hariri. Gul later visited the tomb of Hariri, and voiced hope that such incidents will not be repeated. An MFA official said the FM had no plans for any official contacts while he was in Beirut.

WSJ Column Draws Criticism, Praise: The February 16 column by Robert Pollock in "The Wall Street Journal" criticizing the Turkish media for encouraging anti-American conspiracy theories drew strong reactions across the media today. Government-owned "Star" newspaper decried the column as part of an effort 'by the US administration and the US media' to 'throw mud' at Turkey. The paper accused the United States of using the US media to 'take revenge' for Turkey's decision not to allow US troops to enter Iraq through Turkey in March 2003. Fehmi Koru, a prominent columnist in the Islamist "Yeni Safak" close to some in the AKP government, described the column as 'racist' and 'vengeful.' Koru claimed that Pollock had 'obviously been fed' his negative view of Turkey by US embassy officials. Meral Tamer, writing in the mainstream daily "Milliyet," viewed the Pollock column as a 'shot across Turkey's bow,' and noted that the Journal had not written a word against Turkey in the past 20 years. Tamer noted that the journal 'influences decision making at the White House and in US financial circles,' and urged Turkey to evaluate the Journal's warning carefully. Ismet Berkan, writing for the liberal-intellectual "Radikal," largely agreed with Pollock's that much of the anti-Americanism seen today in Turkey stems from 'anti-imperialist views based on isolationism and fear of foreigners.'

Turkey's Contribution to Broader Middle East Initiative: Turkey plans to discuss the role of women in political and daily life at a conference to be attended by Middle Eastern countries in Istanbul in June, "Cumhuriyet" reports. The paper regards the conference as a contribution by Turkey, a 'model' country, to the US-sponsored Broader Middle East (BME) project. Ankara has assigned Ambassador Omur Orhun as coordinator for Turkey's participation in the BME. Turkey has outlined some principles concerning the BME initiative: Reforms in the Middle East should be supported by domestic dynamics rather than external forces; no single pattern of democracy should be applied to regional countries; all related countries should 'take ownership' of the initiative; only those who are willing to participate should join the project; a special emphasis must be put on the role of NGOs.

Turk Among 8 Shot Dead in Iraq: A Turkish national is among eight people found shot dead near the town of Balad, north of Baghdad. All the victims, employees of a US base near Balad, were on their way to work when they were abducted and killed.

MEDIA REACTION: Transatlantic Relations/Iraq/Middle East

"Anti-Americanism and a Paranoid Society"
Ismet Berkan warned in the liberal-intellectual "Radikal" (2/18): "The Wall Street Journal article by Robert Pollock not only puts a mirror to our face, but also warns about the danger of losing US friendship. Rising anti-Americanism in Turkey is an undeniable fact. One can come up with many

reasons for it, and a certain amount of the blame can be attributed to the United States. But the fact of the matter is that growing anti-Americanism largely stems from a paranoia, just as was expressed by the WSJ writer. . There are many reasons to get angry at the US -- for taking revenge for the 9/11 attacks against innocent Afghans and Iraqis, for instance, or for seeking more revenge in the occupation of Iraq. Or you may be angry at the US for not signing the Kyoto protocol. There are reasons to be angry at the US, but expressing this anger must also be in a healthy fashion. I am afraid the current anti-Americanism in Turkey has gone beyond frustration about certain US policies. Anti-Americanism in Turkey, as Pollock wrote, stems more from our isolationist and xenophobic tendencies, and includes anti-imperialistic rhetoric not unlike that of the former Soviet Union."

"The Danger of Civil War in Northern Iraq"
Kamuran Ozbir argued in the nationalist "Ortadogu" (2/18):
"Things are not moving in the right direction in Iraq, and this has resulted in severe consequences for the situation in Kirkuk. The Kurds are working hard to regain their political rights after being suppressed by Saddam's regime and its Arabization policy. The Kurds are moving to settle in Kirkuk in the hopes that it will be the capital city of a future Kurdish state. Such steps have been kept under control by the US, at least for now. The US military presence helped the formation of a regional parliament representing the four minority groups. With the help of the US, some other political regulations were also implemented and tension in this area is now under control. A civil war in Iraq or a separate Kurdish state may seem like doomsday scenarios, but they are not completely out of the question. Ankara should work to improve ties with Kurdish leaders and take steps toward changing the current psychology on both sides. That should include stopping financial aid to the Iraqi Turkmen Front and urging Kurdish leaders to act in a fair and just manner. There is also a strong need for a special UN representative in Kirkuk to work with both sides."

"Forming New Fronts in the Middle East"
Sami Kohen opined in the mass appeal "Milliyet" (2/18):
"Hariri's assassination, just like other similar examples, will be added on the list of murders carried out by unknown persons. Such events are always open to various conspiracy theories, and the speculation will continue until the facts come to the surface. As France has already suggested, therefore, it would be appropriate to have the assassination investigated by an international commission. This can be done under UN supervision as well, as long as the Lebanese government gives permission. The assassination in Beirut gave the US an opportunity to intensify its campaign against Syria. In a way, the US has benefited from the incident. All US officials, including Secretary of State Rice, are pressuring Damascus heavily to meet certain conditions - to stop sheltering terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, to prevent terrorist infiltration into Iraq, and to withdraw from Lebanon under an existing UN decision. Will Syria, which has so far rejected US demands and threats, change its stance? That seems doubtful. On the contrary, Syria is forming a new front with Iran against the US. These new formations in the always dangerous territory of the Middle East, signal a period of new conflict and tension."

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